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COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS:
PROCLAMATION OF INTERNATIONAL YEARS

Letter dated 27 June 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 12 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council, I have the honour to request you to draw the attention of the Council at its substantive session of 1997 to the question of the proclamation of the year 2000 as the international year for the culture of peace.

In accordance with its fundamental purpose of peace-building as defined in its Constitution, in July 1989 UNESCO held the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men in Yamoussoukro (Côte d'Ivoire), out of which the concept of the culture of peace was born. The promotion of a culture of peace is increasingly being seen as an objective not only of UNESCO but also of the other intergovernmental agencies of the United Nations system and of Member States and non-governmental organizations. This concept has so inspired activities at various levels and in many regions that it is now accepted that the culture of peace has become a worldwide movement.

The proposal to proclaim the year 2000 as the international year for the culture of peace has received the support of a number of Member States. The objective of a concerted effort to draw the attention of the international community to the promotion of a culture of peace arises out of the Declaration of Puebla of 17 May 1997 (see appendix). The publishers of Latin American newspapers, meeting in Puebla, Mexico, strongly recommended that the United Nations declare an international year for the culture of peace.

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In view of the foregoing, and in accordance with the provisions of rule 12 of the rules of procedure of the Council, please find attached a memorandum from the Government of Côte d'Ivoire concerning this initiative.

I would be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as an official document of the Economic and Social Council.

(Signed) Youssoufou BAMBA
Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire
to the United Nations

Annex

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

The observance of an international year for the culture of peace would render it possible to concert and coordinate the efforts of the international community towards promoting a culture of peace. The year 2000 has been selected for this intent because the turn of the millennium offers a vantage point to oversee the whole coming century, in which we hope to promote and establish a daily culture of peace.

The individual elements of a culture of peace are non-violence and respect for human rights; respect and solidarity among all peoples and dialogue between cultures; linkage of peace to democratic participation and sustainable human development; free flow and sharing of information and knowledge; contribution to conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building and equality between women and men. These are best supported through projects in which people take an active role in transforming their values, attitudes and behaviours. Partnerships between Member States, different parts of civil society and relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system are very necessary to achieve the elaboration, execution and support of sustainable and effective activity to prevent conflict and restore lasting peace and security to afflicted communities.

The process of concerting the efforts of the international community has begun. The General Assembly, by its resolution 51/101 of 12 December 1996 entitled "Culture of peace", which was proposed by 76 Member States, has already undertaken through the United Nations system, the task of preparing a declaration and a programme of action on the culture of peace.

It is hoped that this growing movement will be concerted and firmly put on its path for the coming century, if the year 2000 is proclaimed the international year for the culture of peace, and therefore request the support of the General Assembly for such a decision.

Appendix

DECLARATION OF PUEBLA OF THE MEETING OF PUBLISHERS AND EDITORS OF LATIN AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE

The participants in the meeting of publishers and editors of Latin American newspapers for a culture of peace, convened in Puebla, Mexico, at the invitation of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), declare the following:

That freedom of expression is a prerequisite for consolidating a culture of peace on the continent;

That history shows that the growth and spread of violence is usually preceded and accompanied by hostility to and attempts to silence the free press;

That a culture of peace implies dialogue with and knowledge of others through the full and free flow of ideas, which is principally achieved through an independent press;

That domestic harmony within societies and peaceful understanding between nations require openness of information and opinion in order to overcome differences and reach agreements;

That UNESCO has recognized that freely functioning media can make a key contribution to a culture of peace by disseminating everyone's views and opinions, without violence and in a climate of understanding and respect for others;

That the publishers and editors at this meeting believe in peaceful and creative understanding and tolerance and in the educational potential of the press as a means of transmitting values based on respect for the life and dignity of human beings and of encouraging cooperation for the consolidation of a culture of peace.

In consequence, they:

Confirm their commitment to non-violence;

Express the desire to establish modes of consultation to prevent the escalation of violence in any form;

Reiterate their commitment to a society which lives in peace and turns away from the culture of violence to pursue a culture of peace;

Welcome and endorse the decision of the newspaper publishers of Ecuador and Peru, present at this meeting, to continue the meetings aimed at establishing and maintaining openness of information in relations between the two countries on the road to peace;

Call upon the media to condemn any initiative likely to promote the culture of war and express their concern at the recent lifting of the embargo against the sale of high-technology weapons in the region, which could lead to an arms race the cost of which would inevitably reduce the amount of funds available for the task which has brought them together, namely, to promote a culture of peace;

Express their concern at the concentration of the media internationally, which threatens the freedom of expression and imposes restrictions on the diversity of information and opinion, which are the foundations of a culture of peace;

Proclaim that the freedom of the press includes the right of citizens to information;

Condemn any restrictions by Governments on the freedom of expression and, in particular, any economic pressure against the media and its journalists;

Suggest that UNESCO support cooperation among the media in order to promote the exchange of information on the culture of peace;

Suggest that the United Nations declare 1999 as the "international year of the culture of peace";

Express their appreciation to the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor, for his culture of peace initiative and for inviting them to the meeting;

Thank the Government of the State of Puebla and, in particular, Governor Manuel Bartlett Diaz, for sponsoring the meeting and for the generous hospitality of this friendly city of Puebla, which is part of the cultural heritage of humanity.